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Diana T Fritz 05/24/2007 04:35:34 PM From DB/Inbox: Search Results

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CONFIDENTIAL

SIPDIS
TELEGRAM

April 07, 2003

To: No Action Addressee
Action: Unknown
From: AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI (ABU DHABI 1669 - UNKNOWN)
TAGS: PHUM, PREL, PGOV, ELAB, KSEP
Captions: None
Subject: HUMAN RIGHTS REPORT CD-ROM RECALL CREATES MINOR
CONTRETEMPS IN THE UAE
Ref: None

C O N F I D E N T I A L ABU DHABI 01669

SIPDIS
CXABU:
ACTION: POL
INFO: AMB RSO DCM P/M ECON

DISSEMINATION: POL
CHARGE: PROG

APPROVED: AMB: MWAHBA
DRAFTED: POL: MMENARD
CLEARED: DCM: RALBRIGHT; POL: SWILLIAMS; PAO: KVANDEVATE

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OO RUEHC RUEHZM RUEHTV RUEHJM RUEHDE
DE RUEHAD #1669/01 0971432
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
O 071432Z APR 03
FM AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 9300
INFO RUEHZM/GCC COLLECTIVE
RUEHTV/AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV 0420
RUEHJM/AMCONSUL JERUSALEM 0068
RUEHDE/AMCONSUL DUBAI 3011

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ABU DHABI 001669

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR NEA, NEA/P FOR ACASPAR, NEA/ARP, NEA/RA,
DRL/CRA AND DRL/PHD

E.O. 12958: DECL: 04/06/08
TAGS: [PHUM](#) [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [ELAB](#) [KEM](#) [KSEP](#) [TC](#)
SUBJECT: HUMAN RIGHTS REPORT CD-ROM RECALL CREATES
MINOR CONTRETEMPS IN THE UAE

[1](#)1. (U) Classified by Ambassador Marcelle M. Wahba for
reasons 1.5 (b) and (d).

[1](#)2. (C) SUMMARY: The recall of CD-ROMs containing a
draft Human Rights Report on the Occupied Territories
caused a flurry of activity in the UAE. After reading
an Arabic-language newspaper article that implied
misleadingly that all negative language had been
withdrawn from the Occupied Territories' Report,
MinInfo Shaykh Abdullah Bin Zayid called the
Ambassador on 3 April to complain about the USG's
actions, commenting "if this press report is true, we

might as well all throw our human rights reports in the garbage." After Emboffs coordinated with Consulate Jerusalem and the Department, the Ambassador contacted Abdullah to advise him that the "Al Khaleej" press report was inaccurate. She explained that a draft version of the Human Rights Report on the Occupied Territories had been released on CD-ROM in error and subsequently had to be recalled. She also noted that the correct Occupied Territories' Report had been published on the Department's website. END SUMMARY.

13. (C) On Thursday 3 April, Minister of Information Shaykh Abdullah Bin Zayid called the Ambassador to register concern regarding press reports of the Department's recall of CD-ROMs containing the 2002 Country Reports on Human Rights. Abdullah had read a front-page article in the local Arabic-language daily "Al Khaleej" headlined "Washington Withdraws Documents In Which It Criticizes Israel's Violations," which implied that the Department had withdrawn all negative language from the Human Rights Report on the Occupied Territories. Abdullah told the Ambassador: "If this press report is true, we might as well all throw our human rights reports in the garbage." The Ambassador undertook to respond back with full information.

14. (C) After Emboffs coordinated with Consulate Jerusalem and the Department, the Ambassador contacted Abdullah to advise him that the "Al Khaleej" press report was misleading and inaccurate. She explained that a draft version of the Occupied Territories' Report had been released on CD-ROM in error and subsequently had to be recalled. She also noted that the correct Human Rights Report on the Occupied Territories had been published on the Department's website.

15. (C) Armed with the full AFP story -- the source of the "Al Khaleej" article -- and the Department's press guidance, PAO followed up on the matter by contacting the "Al Khaleej" editor to protest the misleading article. As expected, the editor did not concede that the published article reported less than the full story, claiming that he had "just reported the AFP wire story." However, he offered to publish a clarification to rectify the paper's misreporting, and said that he would publish whatever post requested. Post drafted a short statement and submitted it to NEA/P, but was unable to obtain clearance in time for publication the next day.

16. (U) The "Al Khaleej" article, which editorialized on selected information from the AFP article, read:

Headline: "Washington Withdraws Documents In Which It Criticizes Israel's Violations"

Text: "The U.S. gave a new indication of its total bias to the entity [Israel] after it withdrew all the CD-ROMs which contained annual US Human Rights Reports because of what it described as a printing error which led to 'accusing' 'Israel' of committing human rights violations....The State Department announced that it had withdrawn the CD-ROMs containing the Report after it noticed that some Arab newspapers had published summaries of its human rights report containing excerpts from the rough draft of the chapter on Israel 'not in its final form'. An American official said 'this error was unintentional and there was no bad intention in it.' In the version of the report on the CD-ROMs it says that Israel's 'respect' for human rights in the Occupied Territories is still poor and the situation worsened in many areas as 'Israel' continued to commit numerous serious human rights abuses. The final version of the report for 2002 is found on the website of the State Department on the Internet."

¶7. (U) Interestingly, the local English-language daily "Gulf Today," sister paper to "Al Khaleej," ran the full AFP report in its entirety and more or less verbatim, although under the headline "US Revises Rights Report to Appease Israel." The "Gulf Today" article noted that despite changes in the language between the draft "Israel" report on the CD-ROM and the final and correct "Israel" report posted on the Department's website, both versions of the report catalogued a number of Israeli human rights abuses. The article also noted that the final official report stated that "Israel's overall human rights record in the Occupied Territories remained poor, and worsened in several areas as it continued to commit serious human rights abuses."

¶8. (C) COMMENT: The quick media and official reaction to the Department's recall of the CD-ROMs demonstrates the political sensitivity here to USG actions regarding Israel, which is particularly heightened at this time because of the Iraq war and continued violence in the territories. Fortunately, Abdullah had read the UAE Report and commended it to the Ambassador, noting that he agreed with 99 % of its contents. The "Al Khaleej" editor's willingness to engage in the current hostile media climate is noteworthy, and Post will follow up on this matter in a telephone interview between Deputy Secretary Armitage and "Al-Khaleej" later this week. Scheduled to discuss a wide range of issues, this forum will provide us with an excellent opportunity to reaffirm the objectivity of the human rights reports, including the Human Rights Report on the Occupied Territories.
END COMMENT.

WAHBA